

## Songs and Meditations for the Days of Awe

Since September 2001, we have made Psalm 122:7 into a prologue to the Mourners' Kaddish of Erev Rosh HaShannah and Erev Yom Kippur. This verse is a prayer and hope for the well being of Jerusalem and, we add, for all other great cities that have suffered from human and natural destruction:

יְהִי- שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵילְךָ      Y'hee shalom b'chay-laych  
שְׁלוֹה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ      Shal'vah b'ar-m'no-ta-yich

May there be well being within your walls  
Tranquility within your halls.

For a month before Rosh HaShannah and continuing until Simchat Torah, we add Psalm 27 to the regular prayer service. Psalm 27:4 has become a particularly important part of our service. Its familiar melody has become a call to public prayer after each silent Amidah on Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur:

אַחַת שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת-ה'      Achat sha'altee may-ate Adonai  
אוֹתָהּ אֶבְקֶשׁ      O-tah ava-kesh  
שִׁבְתִּי בְּבַיִת ה'      Shiv-tee b'vayt Adonai  
כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי      Kol y'may cha-yai  
לְחַזוֹת בְּנֹעַם-ה'      La-cha-zot b'no-am Adonai  
וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהֵיכָלוֹ      U'l-vaker b'hay-chalo

One thing do I ask of the Lord  
Only that do I seek  
To live in the house of the Lord  
All the days of my life  
To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
To reflect in His temple.

As the sun begins to set on the eve of Yom Kippur, we extinguish the lights in the sanctuary, replacing the overhead lighting and the fading sunlight with the light of memorial candles lit in memory of those in our community of families who have died during the past year. As lights are lit by representatives of those families, we sing the melody of “Or Zarua la-tzadik, Light is sown for the righteous.” When all of the candles have been lit, past presidents of Beth El, all wearing white robes, remove the Torah Scrolls from the Ark, in preparation for Kol Nidre. One candle from the table of memorial flames is placed in the empty Ark which now stands devoid of the Torah-light that usually fills it. Once light is restored to the Ark, we begin a procession through the congregation, bringing the Torah Scrolls within reach while we sing: “Or Zarua la-tzadik:”

אור זָרַע לַצְדִּיק Or zaru'a la-tzadik  
וְלִישָׁרֵי לֵב שִׂמְחָה U'l-yish-ray layv sim'cha  
שִׂמְחוּ צְדִיקִים בַּיהוָה Sim'chu tzadikim ba-adonai  
וְהוֹדוּ לְזֵכֶר קָדְשׁוֹ V'hodu l'zecher kawd-sho

Light is sown for the righteous  
And joy for the upright  
Rejoice, O righteous, in the Lord  
And praise his holy name.